33rd Annual Report 2007-2008

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

April 1, 2007 - March 31, 2008

Annual Report Contents

Chair's Report 1

Vision and Mission 3

Highlights from Strategic Priorities 4

Goals and Accomplishments 5

Core Business 1 - Admission 5

Core Business 2 - Transfer 6

Core Business 3 - Communication 8

Core Business 4 - Influence 9

For all inquiries, contact:

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

11th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5
Phone: (780) 422-9021
Fax: (780) 422-3688
Email: acat@gov.ab.ca
www.acat.gov.ab.ca

Chair's Report

The Honourable Doug Horner
Minister of Advanced Education and Technology
342 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Horner:

On behalf of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer and in accordance with the Council's terms of reference, I am pleased to provide you with the Thirty-Third Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 2008.

Alberta's post-secondary institutions continue to be strongly committed to Alberta's transfer system, whose basic principle is that a student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has already been demonstrated. Council's work revolves around matters that will assist learners in their quest for lifelong learning. The 33rd edition of the Alberta Transfer Guide showcases the post-secondary institutions' willingness to cooperate and collaborate for the benefit of the learner.

We are pleased with the progress ACAT has made in the past year. Thanks to our network of "Contact Persons" which includes a representative from each of the 36 post-secondary institutions, the Online Alberta Transfer Guide now has over 28,500 active transfer agreements and more than 42,000 grandfathered transfer agreements.

Two significant accomplishments took place in 2007-2008. Council provided significant input into the development of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's Roles and Mandates Policy Framework. Council provided strategic recommendations to the Ministry on opportunities to enhance learner pathways and ensure seamless transitions are available for Alberta learners and will be focusing on implementing related initiatives in our 2008-2011 Business Plan. In addition, Council made strides in increasing transition opportunities for Aboriginal learners by expanding our membership to include a representative of First Nation's Colleges and by welcoming Red Crow Community College to the Alberta Transfer System.

On behalf of ACAT, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the post-secondary institutions that are part of Alberta's transfer system as they continue to explore ways and means of facilitating smooth transitions for students. I would also like to thank the Ministry for the support provided by the Secretariat and the department. I look forward to our work over the next year to help facilitate transitions for learners and to realize the Campus Alberta vision.

Ron Woodward

Chair

ACAT Strategic Direction 2007 - 2008

Vision

Alberta's post secondary institutions work co-operatively to provide a transfer system that is responsive to the needs of learners in the matters of admissions, transfer credit and the recognition of prior learning.

Mission

The mission of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is to be a catalyst for necessary change and an advocate for learners in the areas of admission and transfer to educational programs.

ACAT provides leadership and direction in the improvement and enhancement of educational opportunities for learners through inter-institutional transfer.

ACAT also plays an active role in the implementation of these policies through monitoring, mediation and research. Council has a continuing responsibility for facilitating improvement in communications and working relationships across all institutions and programs regarding the admission of transfer students and the award of transfer credit.

To carry out its mission, ACAT:

- Identifies issues and explores resolutions to these issues with stakeholders;
- Advocates for learners at both a general level through its Principles, and specific level through interaction of ACAT staff with learners;
- Communicates with stakeholders and encourages communication among stakeholders on matters regarding admissions and transfer;
- Provides a forum for discussion of issues arising out of environmental changes and trends related to post-secondary education;
- Conducts research to appropriately inform all participants and stakeholders in the transfer system.

Highlights from Strategic Priorities

ACAT has identified strategic priorities to respond to the significant opportunities and challenges influencing its ability to achieve its goals and strategies for 2007-2010. Council has provided significant input into the development of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's *Roles and Mandates Policy Framework*. The Council's main focus in this area was providing strategic recommendations to the Ministry on opportunities to enhance learner pathways and to ensure seamless transitions are available for Alberta learners.

The strategic priorities described below were identified as key tasks for Council over the past year, and were focused on in addition to the important ongoing core businesses of ACAT.

Learner Transitions

ACAT continued to provide leadership to ensure that secondary to post-secondary admission issues were addressed. Further work was done to ensure clarity of information for high school students to help them select appropriate courses through work done through articulation committees in areas where Alberta Education curriculum is undergoing significant changes.

National and International Leadership

ACAT continued its work with other Canadian jurisdictions through its leadership role in the Council of Ministers of Education Canada Working Group on Credit Transfer.

Council continued to develop its relationship with partners in the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) and committed to working more closely on joint initiatives in the future.

ACAT also continues to be a contributing member of the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT).

ACAT Strategic Direction 2007 - 2008

ACAT's Profile

ACAT took significant strides towards raising the awareness of ACAT though the development of a strategic communications plan, which identifies numerous opportunities to further raise stakeholder awareness.

Presentations were made at a number of local, provincial and national conferences and workshops.

Recognition of Prior Learning

ACAT held a provincial workshop on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in May 2007, and committed to holding an annual forum for Alberta PLAR practitioners. Alberta will co-host the 2008 Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) Conference.

Council members provided significant input into the preliminary development of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's PLAR Framework, and is committed to championing several of the strategies in the Framework once it is completed.

Research

A web usability survey was developed to help determine opportunities for a redesigned ACAT website.

Student focus groups were held in order to determine awareness levels of ACAT's tools and resources, and the Chair made numerous visits to ACAT member institutions in order to determine the key issues that are currently facing the transfer system.

The *Transfer Patterns Study* was completed for students registered in Fall 2007 in collaboration with the Alberta Transfer System member post-secondary institutions. Key findings from the study include a continued trend in increased into-province transfer, students transferring in multiple directions, and a slight decline in transfer within the province.

Goals and Accomplishments

Core Business One
Admission

Admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions are clearly articulated.

Goal 1 Facilitate the development and maintenance of fair and equitable admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions.

Outcomes

1.1 Students make smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to post-secondary studies.

1.2 Students have improved opportunities to apply for admission.

Accomplishments

Outcome 1.1

- Continued secondary to post-secondary articulation meetings in Mathematics.
- Prepared and distributed an interim report on future changes to the secondary Math curriculum in order to gauge institution admission policies for the new curriculum.
- Completed the Social Studies articulation final report which outlines pathways to post-secondary studies for students completing the new Social Studies curriculum.
- Established a secondary to post-secondary articulation committee for Languages other than English.
- Continued post-secondary to post-secondary articulation in Computing Science, Biological Sciences, and Engineering.
- Redesigned the Biological Sciences Block Transfer chart in order to better reflect the roles of participating institutions.
- Continued to consult with the Provincial Academic Upgrading Coordinators and published charts outlining acceptance of upgrading courses for admission to college, technical institute, university or private university college programs.

Outcome 1.2

- Provided recommendations to the development of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's *Roles and Mandates Policy Framework* including that the Ministry strongly promote the use of common admission terminology and look at opportunities to work with institutions to develop a set of Best Practices for admission policies and practices.

Goals and Accomplishments

Core Business Two
Transfer

Facilitate agreements among post-secondary institutions to acknowledge and recognize appropriate previous learning experience.

Goal 2 Learners receive appropriate educational credit as they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Outcomes

2.1 An effective and efficient student transfer system.

2.2 Prior learning assessments are given system-wide recognition.

Accomplishments

Outcome 2.1

- Published the *Alberta Transfer Guide* and updated the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide* daily.
- Saw a slight increase of 184 active by-course transfer agreements for a total of 28,527.
- Added three by-program transfer agreements for a total of 811.
- Collaborated with institutional partners to produce the annual *Transfer Patterns Study* and developed reports highlighting transfer activity between Alberta and other provinces.
- Worked with Ministry representatives in the development of the Graduate Outcomes Survey report specific to Transfer Student Graduates from 2003-2004.
- Provided training and orientation sessions to 48 post-secondary institution representatives.
- Worked with Information and Technology Management representatives to ensure ongoing functionality of the Contact Persons website and transfer database and advocated for development of a Business Case for a future redesign on the ACAT Contact Persons database system.
- Expanded membership in the Alberta Transfer System to include Red Crow Community College.

Outcome 2.2

- Hosted a PLAR workshop for approximately 100 Alberta PLAR practitioners in May 2007, which provided participants an opportunity to explore the facets of PLAR that are most relevant to their institution, including curriculum development, quality assessment processes, resources, and training for faculty and staff.
- Provided input into Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's ongoing development of a PLAR Policy Framework.
- Committed to jointly hosting the CAPLA annual national conference in October 2008.

Goals and Accomplishments

Core Business Three
Communication

Ensure that learners and other stakeholders have timely and accurate information about institutions' admission requirements, course and program transfer options.

Goal 3

Learners have access to current, accurate information on admissions and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities, and are aware of the benefits of the admission and transfer system.

Outcomes

3.1 Information to assist high school and potential transfer students is available.

3.2 Albertans are aware of the benefits of our admissions and transfer system.

Accomplishments

Outcome 3.1

- Continued to work with institutional partners to produce an annual compilation of all transfer agreements contained within the *Alberta Transfer Guide* and the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide*.
- Promoted the *Alberta Transfer Guide* through the Learning Clicks program and the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS).
- The ACAT public website received approximately 5 million hits; a 5.4% increase from the previous year.
- Continued to provide the Transfer Infoline service by responding to approximately 350 e-mail and telephone inquiries.
- Developed a strategic Communications Plan that outlines strategies to raise awareness of ACAT throughout the province. Strategies from the plan will play a key role in ACAT's 2008-2011 Business Plan.
- Held a learner focus group to determine areas where ACAT can improve communications to students.
- Enhanced information available on the website such as increased links to web resources, developing a consolidated PLAR portal, and consolidating institution-specific transfer information.
- Conducted an online website usability survey and compiled results which led to the development of potential short-term and long-term enhancements to the public website.

Outcome 3.2

- Delivered presentations to Learning Clicks Youth and Parent Ambassadors, Alberta College and Technical Institute Student Executive Council (ACTISEC) members, PCCAT members, and the AET Roles and Mandates Policy Framework working groups.
- Attended a meeting with the First Nations Adult Higher Education Consortium to explore strategies to enhance transfer opportunities from First Nations colleges.
- Continued to produce advising charts to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.
- Participated in a national study on PLAR in Alberta coordinated through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Met with Executives of ACTISEC and the Council of Alberta University Students on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

Goals and Accomplishments

Core Business Four
Influence

Influence policy related to admission and transfer issues including assisting and advising other jurisdictions about the procedures for and benefits of establishing and maintaining an efficient and effective admissions and transfer system, and providing a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

Goal 4

ACAT influences policy decisions related to the admissions and transfer system and serves as a model for other jurisdictions.

Outcomes

4.1 Reinforce ACAT as the representative voice in policy development for the advanced education system on items related to Alberta admissions and transfer.

4.2 Alberta post-secondary institutions have a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

4.3 Provide advice and assistance to promote interprovincial portability of courses and programs.

Accomplishments

Outcome 4.1

- Provided advice to AET on the development of the *Roles and Mandates Policy Framework* in the form of 17 recommendations to guide future policy direction related to enhanced learner transitions.
- Provided input and feedback to the Ministry's ongoing development of a provincial PLAR Policy Framework.
- Met with Minister Horner to discuss opportunities for increasing services to students through enhanced web tools.
- Organized a Governance Review subcommittee to explore the structure and role of ACAT in order to enhance Council's leadership role in the areas of admission and transfer.

Outcome 4.2

- Provided an opportunity for round table discussions of institutional issues at ACAT meetings.
- Ensured that the host institution at ACAT meetings is invited to participate and discuss admissions and transfer issues at their institution.
- 63 institution and ACAT representatives attended the Contact Persons' meeting to discuss key transfer issues and to identify opportunities for improvement to the ACAT database system.
- Chair visited four member institutions to discuss issues and opportunities at their institution, and plans to continue to visit more member institutions on a regular basis.

Outcome 4.3

- Attended and presented at the second annual PCCAT meeting held in Prince Edward Island in June 2007.

Goals and Accomplishments

- Chair presented at the forum on Quality Assurance and Credit Transfer at the May Quality Assurance Symposium in Quebec City.
- Met with the co-chair of BCCAT to discuss opportunities for continued collaboration between the two jurisdictions, and to discuss next steps for the implementation of the ACAT-BCCAT Transfer Credit Protocol.
- Attended the annual meeting of the BCCAT Articulation Committee Chairs and a meeting of BCCAT's Transfer and Articulation Committee.
- ACAT Secretariat Staff attended CAPLA's Fall Focus Workshop held in Toronto in October 2007.
- Supported a culture of interprovincial transfer by promoting Council and institution membership in the PCCAT.